

[00:00:00] This is, We Met You When. A podcast by journalism students at Toronto Metropolitan University. This bonus episode is all about, Resonate 2024.

[00:00:18] Leo: Oh my gosh, Resonate. I, the word gathering really uh, is like it makes it sound small, but it is a gathering of craftsmen, of people who care deeply about audio and their craft.

[00:00:31] Alexa: I've been saying that it is uh the only audio event or conference or festival that I come away from feeling inspired and not like sort of like doomsday-y about.

[00:00:43] Alyssa: The festival itself was more fun than I thought it would be as well, like you said it just felt like a support group, like everybody was so friendly, everybody was so excited that we were there, excited to talk to us, hear our ideas, talk about, Shari what she did for us within the class and bringing us here.

[00:00:57] Leo: Yeah it's just a very very craft focused, vibey, friendly conference.

[00:01:07] Leo: Resonate is a podcast festival held in Richmond Virginia in the fall. It's only been around for about 3 years, but it's already so popular. I'm Leo, a fourth year J-school student at Toronto Metropolitan University. I went to Resonate's very first student podcast day with some of my classmates.

[00:01:30] Alexa: I'm Alexa. I am a grad student.

[00:01:32] Gabrielle: I'm Gabrielle McMahon. I am a fourth-year undergraduate student.

[00:01:35] Alyssa: I'm Alyssa. I also went to Resonate with the girlies and I am a fourth year undergraduate student.

[00:01:41] Leo: So let's talk about how big of a deal this is. We're in Toronto, Canada. Not exactly close to Richmond Virginia in the US and we're all students. Going on a trip like this is kind of out of our budget, not to mention, we didn't even know what Resonate was. But Chioke changed that. He's the founder of Resonate podcast festival. He might say he's the cat behind Resonate.

[00:02:11] Leo: His website says, "Yo, I'm Chioke. I'm a philosopher." So we had a feeling he'd be a pretty cool guy. He's the one who had reached out to our professor, Shari Okeke, to invite us to the festival. It took some time, but our professor raised enough money to cover the cost to take four students from our advanced podcasting radio documentary class. Anyone who wanted to go had to apply.

[00:02:42] Leo: The four of us didn't know each other. None of us thought we would be chosen. But next thing you know we're in Richmond and documenting everything. Even our outfits.

[00:02:53] Alyssa: Later!

[00:02:54] Gabrielle: Hi! Day 1 at Resonate.

[00:02:57] Leo: Since none of us had ever been to a podcast festival, we didn't really know what to expect, but we did try to dress like professionals.

[00:03:07] Alexa: Outfit of the day. Do you want to tell them what you have on?

[00:03:08] Gabrielle: Sure. The blazer is from Gabby. Gabby can here.

[00:03:13] Alyssa: Ok, so I have this cute little shirt from H&M and then these jeans are probably also from H&M. Um, the shoes I got at Primark in Georgia so if y'all ever down there for like cheap good clothes.

[00:03:29] Alyssa: Walking in at first, I was really nervous because it just felt like we stepped into like a whole different atmosphere, like we stepped through a portal. And it was just all of these industry professionals, but everybody was so down to earth and grounded. You walk in everybody's laughing, hugging each other. "Oh my god I haven't seen you in so long! How are

you? How is this project you're working on?" And everybody was so nice to us and they treated us like equals and I remember feeling really comfortable. I remember really just looking around the room and feeling like, wow I feel safe here.

[00:03:58] Leo: We got the chance to meet Resonate's keynote speaker.

[00:04:01] Nicole Hill: I'm Nicole Hill. I go by the title of showrunner, which just means that I manage both the creative and the boring production spreadsheet side of things. And most of my time is spent working on my podcast that's coming out in February called "Our Ancestors Were Messy."

[00:04:15] Intro: The Secret Adventures of Black People. And Coco Hill Productions present... Our ancestors were messy. Percy Juliet, danced, drank wine, and dot dot dot. With a professor's daughter.

[00:04:30] Nicole Hill: So my role at Resonate this year was to be the keynote speaker and to kick off the festival and not just like to be the first person speaking, but to kick off the vibe of the festival and make sure people understood that it was meant to be an event where we talked about both non fiction and fiction and the ways in which they can compliment one another.

[00:04:50] Leo: Earlier in the semester, Nicole did a presentation for our class. But that was by zoom. Seeing her in person was a whole new experience.

[00:04:58] Gabrielle: As soon as Nicole Hill came on and she started talking, I just felt like invigorated. Like I was like, oh my gosh, okay I'm ready for this conference.

[00:05:04] Alyssa: Same, I absolutely loved Nicole's presentation and I had a similar feeling that everybody had, just going in being like, I don't know what to expect, but her just starting off with like a bang, I was like, oh, okay, this is why I'm here.

[00:05:17] Alexa: The manner that she was speaking, like how casual it was, and how passionate she was about what she was sharing and what she was working on. She genuinely cared that every single person in that audience showed up for her and that made me want to invest like all my time all my energy into hearing what she had to say.

[00:05:31] Leo: We listened as Nicole took us out of our seats in that crowded auditorium and brought us into her world of audio stories. Her newest podcast is "Our Ancestors Were Messy." It's a Tribeca Festival 2024 Official Selection.

[00:05:45] Outro: Today, a scandal is percolating in Howard University's chemistry lab between a couple whose brilliance made history and whose messiness made headlines.

[00:05:55] Outro: Drama.

[00:05:57] Leo: She told us how she handled some super honest feedback.

[00:06:00] Nicole Hill: This note that I got on my show which said that it was boring. And so in trying to make it more interesting the earliest iterations, I love film. I really love old Hollywood but I like stay very up to date on what people are doing and in particular what directors are doing because I think we look at them as craftsmen and women and people who have a story they want to tell in a particular way. And I think maybe before I was trying to imitate what I'd heard before. So what I did is I walked folks through um three kind of exercises I took myself through to find my directorial voice. So I'll just share this one example. In trying to build the narrative world that I wanted my show to live in, I looked at, okay you know Sophia Coppola builds these very pastel colored, dreamy very women focused worlds and then I compared it to Baz Luhrmann, who builds these kind of like loud in your face, big colors lots of camera movement kind of world that comes from the world of music videos and so I was like, okay, well what kind

of world do I want to build? And I looked at some audio fiction and and looked at compared the different worlds that they'd built and landed on the one for me.

[00:06:59] Leo: If you're in awe of Nicole, you're not the only one. Everyone I've spoken to from Resonate loved her presentation. She brings so much passion to her craft. After being with her in person I had an epiphany. I realized, I really want to work in audio.

[00:07:20] Leo: On the student day, we actually had the opportunity to present our portfolios to people who do work in audio. I was so self-conscious. I didn't really have any audio to share with them yet. I was in the early stages of producing this season of "We Met You When." I brought a short film I made last time I visited Portugal, which is where I'm from.

[00:07:56] Audio from short film: Eles não sabem. E o sonho. É na espuma.

[00:08:03] Leo: It's something that I poured a lot of intention and love into. To my surprise, everyone in the room recognized that.

[00:08:09] Employee: I'm still struggling with this, so I'm telling you, like, don't pigeonhole yourself. I know you said like, I don't know what I wanna do with all of these things. Like, saying that you're doing one thing doesn't mean that you can't do the other things. Like you can still make films, I still make weird art and like build weird microphones and whatever. Like you can do all of those things.

[00:08:26] Leo: Gabby also did a presentation and neither of us even realized this was going to happen.

[00:08:31] Gabrielle: So, I remember kind of having the impression that it was going to be one on one. And then we get up there and there's like a boardroom table and I'm like okay where's the private room sessions like uh, you know, I'm I'm not, I'm not in the right place. Um, and then there's all of these like really cool and important creatives that are sitting at the table that kind of work in various roles in the audio industry and it was kind of just like go sit at the the head of the table and present yourself.

[00:08:56] Leo: Gabby did great.

[00:08:57] Gabrielle: Because objectivity I think is a funny word. Um, I remember in my first semester being like, well I don't know if anyone's really objective. Um, we choose our sources and we choose the words that we write. So I, I just try to be transparent. I don't know if I aim to be objective and I don't know if that's controversial.

[00:09:13] Employee: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:09:15] Employee: Though I'm not in a New York Times newsroom, I think that's like a raging debate that people are having about objectivity and how that works. But I think what we've always found is that sometimes the only way into a story or to connect with someone is to have a sense of place and it's something that's really interesting about these stories in particular is that in doing this sort of reconciliation journalism, you being the conduit to the two sides is actually one of the only ways to kind of approach this.

[00:09:43] Employee: When I was listening to the person interviewing you, I kind of wanted them to get out of the way and and just wanted to hear it straight from you.

[00:09:51] Megan Nadolski: I was so impressed with all of the student work. I honestly was floored by not only the level of maturity from a technical standpoint but of maturity from a personal storytelling standpoint, um and how each of the students presented themselves. My name is Megan Nadolski. I am the Chief Operating Officer over at Goat Rodeo and we're a creative audio agency in DC.

[00:10:13] Megan Nadolski: I think one thing uh to say about audio as like a major, uh and even certainly as a profession is everything is moving so fast. So you just never actually know like what a crop of students is going to bring to you because like when I was in journalism school, there was not even an audio journalism major. There was no place to be. I mean you could go work at the student radio station, but there was nothing like this level of education, um and so to see the students come out and do like give this portfolio review, talk about their work in such a way, I was floored and so were my teammates at Goat Rodeo. We were just incredibly impressed. Um so amazed by you all. And you're all so multi-hyphenate too. So you're like thinking about your career in a way that's like okay well, I know how to do audio but I also know how to do video and I can do photo and I write really well. And so you guys have all the mediums. I think that's what it's gonna take to survive for real.

[00:11:01] Leo: We're still thinking about that advice and using it.

[00:11:05] Gabrielle: Fast forward to the episode that I'm working on now for season three of "We Met You When," and it's two voices in the story. So me and then Isabelle Bailey, who is a young woman, a young Algonquin woman who is a powwow dancer, she works in her community. And um, we actually have a lot of similarities and so where my voice comes in is kind of evaluating how like my personal experience or like my bias impacts like the journalism I do or the people that I connect with through journalism. Um, and at first I was finding it really hard to kind of balance my voice and like Isabelle's story. I felt like I was kind of like interfering with what she had to say. Um, and Shari kept drawing me back to like this is what Meg said like, think about what Megan said in Goat Rodeo, like you have an interesting voice, you're not overshadowing. But I still felt like I was overshadowing. But I think now, I, I see how our stories kind of interweave in a very beautiful way.

[00:11:59] Leo: What was really cool was that it wasn't only about the sessions. Some of our favorite moments were just sitting around having casual conversations with the pros, like colleagues.

[00:12:12] Alyssa: I met Allie and Steph. They both work for Edit Audio. And when I was talking to Allie about our podcast episode of "We Met You When" my group and I are doing, our honest title is "Sex in the Archive" and it's about how sex workers were essentially ignored by the government during COVID-19 and a lot of them lost their main source of income and they couldn't access certain benefits that they gave other Canadian citizens such as CERB. Um and I was talking to Allie about this and she had some connections within the sex work community. And right now she's, I guess I would call her our editorial guidance consultant in a sense. So right now she's checking over our script and she's just gonna give any feedback that she has and it was just amazing that I was able to go to Resonate and make that type of connection.

[00:12:59] Leo: We listened to the pros. We talked to the pros. We presented to the pros. Now I kind of feel like a pro. Can I say that? Yeah I can say that. We hope what we learned can help other people starting out in audio.

[00:13:16] Alyssa: Anything can happen, have an open mind and don't be afraid to talk to people that you want to talk to, especially. Don't be afraid to make those connections. Don't be afraid to put yourself out there. Whatever you have prepared with you, you never know you might have something that someone else needs or doesn't have.

[00:13:31] Gabrielle: You need to have a vision. As long as you have a vision you have everything, it doesn't matter what equipment you have.

[00:13:37] Alexa: You should really hone your collaboration skills. I learned from the people who were speaking and the professionals, but also learned from people that I just met. And so I think yeah, place value on collaboration.

[00:13:49] Alyssa: We don't have to take ourselves and our work so seriously if we don't want to. Like, some of our personality can come into our work. There's no right way or right model that we have to follow.

[00:14:00] Leo: It's kind of hard to believe we almost didn't go. To be honest, if we had to pay for this trip, none of us would have even applied.

[00:14:08] Alyssa: I applied because first of all they said free trip, I said, hey! Um, and I was just really excited about that because this is something that we all talked about as well is that if we had to pay for it, I think a lot of us probably wouldn't have applied in the first place. So it was just one of those like once in a lifetime opportunities.

[00:14:24] Gabrielle: I didn't go on like an international semester and so I saw like lots of folks in the journalism school and like kind of the opportunities and the experience of that. So that was one of the motivators because I was like, you know, I want to do some kind of traveling for school. And of course, traveling with Shari sounded great.

[00:14:39] Alexa: I had applied to go on another, um, I believe it was a journalism trip over the summer and I was really excited about it and being in a new environment and learning different things. Um, but once I sat through that presentation and saw the cost breakdown I was like, oh, like I can't afford this anymore. Like, so I had to drop that class.

[00:14:54] Leo: So, what I was thinking was basically what everybody was thinking. It was just I don't have the money to go. I've never applied to anything like this before because, um I think I just kind of get in my head and I'm just kind of like, why would they pick me? You know? And so I don't know who else applied super last minute but I was one of the people who applied literally 5 minutes before the application closed.

[00:15:16] Leo: And we're so glad we did. We got to meet people like Steph Colbourn. She's a fellow Canadian, now based in New York. Steph is CEO of Edit Audio, a queer led team of women, non-binary and trans creatives. Steph is so invested in us and I just think it's really cool to see so much representation in a field that is not always inclusive. She's still giving us great advice now that we're all back home.

[00:15:41] Nicole Hill: I think a lot of spaces here don't make you feel like you do deserve to be there until you have like a certain amount of awards or a certain amount of whatever and it's just not true. So I think just keep making stuff and and and just believe that you have a place um in whatever room you walk into because there will be people that are intentionally trying to make it feel like you don't.

[00:16:01] Nicole Hill: I think that the best thing that happened for me when I came into podcasting is that I started volunteering, um for a storytelling organization that was starting a podcast and I met a bunch of other podcasters and we became friends, we called ourselves the Pod Squad. It's so much easier to grow together than it is to keep yourself encouraged, to Google every question you have, to go to these conferences and be alone. So I do feel like a lot of times people focus on finding the mentorship and the people who have gone ahead of them and who can give them advice, but I think it's just as important to find people who can stand alongside you and just keep you encouraged. The reason I know how to perform or to speak and present in a way that sounds like I'm talking to people is because my friends listen to it for

me and tell me when it's right in a way that like I would not ask a mentor to do. So I think we focus a lot on the mentorship but I think you've got to find a crew. You gotta find a pod squad that's gonna hold you down when you're like this is crazy and I can't take anymore and I have to stop podcasting. They'll be like, "Take a day off, then get back in the studio, you know."

[00:17:03] Megan Nadolski: We all remember starting out in our careers and needing answers and maybe not getting them or feeling kind of lost. And so I guess my first, my first piece of advice would be like do not be shy, like be, be brave, like ask people questions, go right into their inbox, like why not you? Why shouldn't they answer your questions? Why shouldn't they give you advice? So just, I, I know at a very base level like go seek people out, ask them questions, connect with them, do not be afraid. You're like, you know, they were you once.

[00:17:40] Leo: If I had to sum up what I learned at Resonate, I would tell you what I kept hearing while I was there. If you have an idea, you just have to do the dang thing.

[00:17:59] Leo: "We Met You When" is a production by journalism students at Toronto Metropolitan University. This episode was produced by me, Leo Diaz. Shari Okeke is our executive producer and professor. Eunice Kim is our senior producer and teaching assistant. Angela Glover is our director of audio production. Our season 3 theme music was composed and performed by Eric Crolla. Web design by Lindsay Hanna. Special thanks to the creative school, the school of journalism and the journalism research center at Toronto Metropolitan for supporting season 3 by sending us to the Resonate 2024 podcast festival in Richmond Virginia. I want to say a special thank you to Chioke l'Anson for inviting us to Resonate 2024. And of course to our professor, Shari Okeke, for taking a chance on all of us and in turn inspiring us to be part of this industry. Thank you for listening.